

The Death Wish

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Category: Katekyo Hitman Reborn!

Genre: Friendship, Supernatural

Language: English

Characters: OC, Tsuna/Tsunayoshi S.

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-15 07:47:28

Updated: 2016-04-15 07:47:28

Packaged: 2016-04-27 16:40:09

Rating: M

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,531

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Hypothermia at eight years old. Heatstroke at nine. Hit by a train at ten. Tsuna keeps falling into a series of deaths, only to be revived back to life each time. He begins to befriend his mysterious saviour named Izanagi, who calls himself a Death King. Soon Tsuna's heart will kindle a wildfire determination to stay by Izanagi's side, beyond the boundaries of life and death...

The Death Wish

Hypothermia at eight years old. Heatstroke at nine. Hit by a train at ten.

Tsuna keeps falling into a series of deaths, only to be revived back to life each time. He begins to befriend his mysterious saviour named Izanagi, who calls himself a Death King and whose fate has unknowingly become deeply intertwined with Tsuna's from the very first death.

These peaceful days cannot last forever, and yet Tsuna's heart will soon kindle a wildfire determination to stay by Izanagi's side, beyond the boundaries of life and death.

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Chapter 1

**Intertwining
Fates**

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It was an unusually warm spring morning when Tsuna died of hypothermia. He was curled up in a fetal position with his arms circling his knees and his head pillowed on a bag of ice cubes. He

was inside the chest freezer, inside the kitchen, inside Nanimore Elementary School.

He had been trapped since yesterday afternoon, when the school halls were silent and small hands had toppled him inside with smothered giggles.

His soul tugged loose of the bonds of life and drifted upwards like a dream. It rose from Tsuna's heart, massaged his throat and had just slipped past his tongue when a slender finger intruded his mouth and pushed it back down.

It is not yet your time, a voice murmured in the empty shell of Tsuna's mind. Then, his blue tinged lips parted in a painful, betrayed gasp.

Tsuna was eight years old and he had only now grasped how children, too, could be cruel beyond intent.

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"But Okaa-san, I want to come too!" Tsuna whined.

"No Tsu-kun, ah, where did I put them?" Nana replied distractedly, fussing in her oversized handbag with one hand. She gave a breathy exclamation and pulled out a stream of catalogue vouchers like an accordion. "Here they are! I'll be right back, just take a nap okay?"

"But it's too hot!" Tsuna mumbled but his mother had already stepped outside their little red car. It was a special trip to the big chain supermarket, the one in the new commercial district half an hour's drive from Nanimori. Nana had been chattering excitedly about the special canned food and ironing boards models and western cleaning products all morning, so when she smiled at Tsuna at the shops automatic doors Tsuna made himself wave back.

As soon as Nana was out of sight, he puffed his cheeks and slumped down against the scratchy car seat. He tugged at his orange hoodie's neck several times before wriggling it off him altogether. The car doors were locked, the windows pulled up and the haze of heat was lulling him into a wave of sleep.

Tsuna yawned and let the sun at its zenith take his nine-year-old soul away.

Two hours later, that familiar hand was brushing Tsuna's sweaty hair away from his forehead. He groaned, stirring but eyes too lethargic to open. The hand stilled and Tsuna tried to push himself against it like a newborn kitten, craving the icy cold it emitted.

"Who?" Tsuna slurred, his tongue like lead, but he was hushed, not unkindly. He was being wrapped in the stranger's arms and it was like entering an oasis of heavenly coolness. Tsuna sighed and smiled.

He fell asleep again, this time dreaming of silk kimono robes that danced with him in the clouds, twirling him in the wind until he laughed and laughed and laughed.

Nana would never fully forget dropping her laden shopping bags and screaming as her son lay collapsed with heat stroke, alone with the car doors still locked.

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"I know you," was the first thing Tsuna said upon being revived for the third time in three years.

With his head in the stranger's lap, Tsuna felt his thighs stiffen. It was odd, since the stranger had been unnaturally motionless to begin with as if animation was a novel concept.

Tsuna wriggled his toes. He was sprawled over the railway line, legs bent as if he was running sideways. He should be dead. He did, in fact, die. Tsuna remembered.

"I remember," Tsuna said, picking up his train of thoughts. "I was on my back back from the convenience store for Okaa-san and I bumped into those bullies and they chased me, but then I tripped on the railway lines andâ€¦.and thenâ€¦."

Tsuna frowned. The rest of his memory was in scattered fragments; the clanging of the warning bells, the paralysing terror, the blur of the green faced train as it rushed towards him like a monstrous beastâ€¦" he sat up and choked on a cry, one that should have been too little, too late.

"The students from Nanimori Elementary School ran away. The street was empty this late at night and you, Tsunayoshi Sawada, passed away," the stranger said evenly. His voice was quiet, like the rustling of dead leaves.

It was a voice Tsuna had heard before. He shuffled backwards and looked at the stranger properly for the first time. He was a slim man in a richly embroidered silk kimono. Black hair in an impeccable bun, chrysanthemum kanzashi, porcelain white skinâ€¦" just like a life-sized traditional Japanese doll, save for the milky white eyes that silently watched over Tsuna.

Distant memories lapped at the shore of Tsuna's childhood, of searing cold, then dizzy heat and the hand that had saved him three times now. They were now folded one on top of each other; delicate hands, mysteriously powerful hands.

Tsuna didn't know how long he sat staring but when the stranger rose fluidly to his feet, Tsuna jolted forward. His fingers brushed the fluttering kimono sleeve, clinging on.

"W-wait!" Tsuna begged. "Who are you? Why do you keep saving me? Am I dreaming right now?"

"Interaction with the living is not to be permitted," the stranger recited, as if reading a rulebook aloud. His lips then tilted down and Tsuna stared wide eyed, still on his knees. The stranger hovered, as if perched on a string, before sighing minutely. "Tsunayoshi Sawada qualifies as an exception. You may follow me and I will explain the verdict."

"Verdict" what? What's going on?" Tsuna asked, confused.

"You may follow me and I will explain," the stranger repeated again. He walked away and Tsuna had no choice but to follow. He was led through familiar streets in a situation unfamiliar beyond imagination. Tsuna lagged, stumbled, his limbs weak as if newly healed, but the stranger always slowed down just enough for him to catch up. Still, Tsuna was always one step behind and he was left transfixed by the embroidered patterns of clouds and dragons that embellished the kimono's back.

Tsuna blinked, and a red-scaled dragon blinked back at him.

Tsuna blinked again, and an elderly lady entering her home walked straight through the stranger as if he were a ghost and shut the door behind her.

"Why do you scream?" the stranger turned around and asked, his thin eyebrows furrowing together.

"I" You just" that old lady!"

"Hanami Fujiwara, aged seventy-two, due death date tomorrow," the stranger recited, again as if by pure instinct. "What about her?"

"She's going to die?!" Tsuna's voice rose shrilly. His weak knees finally gave in and he collapsed on the ground, feeling light headed and wishing he was back home where dinner was ready and his bed waiting. Ah, Okaa-san must be wondering where he was. He should really turn around and go back home, ignore everything that happened as a weird dream...

The stranger wordlessly pulled him to his feet and guided him down the next few streets with their hands still joined. His hand was cold, just like on that hot summer's day, and dwarfed Tsuna's own trembling one.

It was because his hand was cold, that Tsuna followed.

They reached the park and the stranger guided Tsuna to sit next to him on one of the empty benches. A stray teenager in a black hoodie swaggered past, hands shoved in his baggy pockets. His eyes slid over them both as if they weren't there.

Tsuna huddled in on himself and was thankful for the gap that distanced him from the stranger sitting on the other end of the bench.

It was the stranger who broke the tense silence by opening his mouth and saying bluntly, "I am the Death King named Izanagi"

"You're _Death_?!" Tsuna exclaimed.

"No," Izanagi corrected. "I am a Death King. My purpose is to guide souls to the Soul Realm after their body has deceased."

"So you're like a shinigami? Like a soul reaper?"

Izanagi frowned, as if unused to being interrupted. He still had the

grace to say, "Yes, that is approximately correct."

Tsuna's mouth fell open, frightened beyond the faintest scream. His heart was pounding and shivers were wracking his ten-year-old shoulders. A shinigami, right here, right in front of him. Tsuna wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't remembered dying three times and being shepherded back to life each time. Maybe it really was an absurd dream but even as the moonlight pooled silver into Izanagi's eyes and his white skin glowed softly in the moonlight, nothing had felt more real to Tsuna in his entire life.

"Oh," Tsuna said softly and fainted.

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Rousing into consciousness after fainting was, as Tsuna now learnt, a rather disorientating affair. All he could remember was the sway of his body tilting over, a jarringly delicate response to his entire worldview on the supernatural shifting on its axis. A shinigami. Tsuna's goosebumps prickled the wood against his neck and he realised he had been laid to rest along the park bench.

Tsuna rubbed the grit out of his eyes and something slipped off his shoulders. He looked down to find Izanagi's kimono pooled over his chest and legs. Its owner sat besides Tsuna's head, forced to the corner of bench yet the distance between them now equalling none. Tsuna blushed and jerked upright.

"I-I'm sorryâ€" Tsuna stammered before a wave of dizziness washed over him and Izanagi's hand lightly guided him back down.

"Rest," Izanagi simply said and Tsuna obeyed. The night sky was a few shades lighter than he previously remembered, from midnight to persian blue, like paint diluted with clear water. The silence, too, was less oppressive than before. Tsuna peered at Izanagi from the corner of his eye in quick glances. He had somehow changed the kimono covering Tsuna for a plain black yukata that struck Tsuna as ill fitting for his feminine features. He looked mismatched, and somehow slightly more human.

Perhaps it was the last thought that gave the courage for Tsuna to venture once more, "I'm sorry for fainting. Aaah, how embarrassing..."

There was a long, dreadful pause where Tsuna contemplated throwing himself headfirst into the murky pond before Izanagi said stiffly, "It is I who should apologise. I collect human souls, not converse with them. You are the first human I have spoken to in such great lengths for many millennia. The arts of social interaction areâ€|not a strength of mine."

"How lonely," Tsuna murmured before his brain to mouth filter caught up with him. He smacked his hands on his face and slid further down the bench. Between the gaps of his fingers, the slope of Izanagi's shoulders was rather pointed. The pond really was looking tempting right now, putting drowning in front of a shinigami aside.

"You are the first person, human or dead, to say that," Izanagi replied quietly. He gathered his composure with dignity,

straightening his posture and meeting Tsuna's eyes once more. It was unconsciously that Tsuna sat himself up and mirrored Izanagi's movements. Something deep inside him was stirring, whispering to Tsuna about momentous winds of change.

"Tsunayoshi Sawada," Izanagi began, back to his monotone recitation voice. "Aged eight, you died from hypothermia. Aged nine, you died from heatstroke. Aged ten at present, you died from impact with a train. Your soul has repeatedly attempted to leave your body before its due death date. Thus your unusual case had fallen into the hands of myself, Death King of Japan."

"I don't understand," Tsuna said, the words fumbling awkwardly in his mouth. He had never felt so stupid or confused before, but Izanagi didn't appear annoyed.

"To simplify, you are not fated yet to die yet Tsunayoshi," Izanagi explained more slowly. "Even I do not know the true death date of a human of your calibre but my abilities can at least know when the time is not right. Your spirit is weak to the point where your soul is trying to leave this realm, instead of struggling to remain like most humans. I have guided your soul back into you each time you have prematurely died, thus reanimating your body to life."

"So I really died. I've died three times," Tsuna whispered, staring at his trembling hands. Izanagi leaned minutely closer, as if readying for another faint, but all Tsuna felt was an odd dislocation with reality, as if Izanagi would suddenly throw confetti and shout _just kidding!_ He took a few deep breaths and the steady ticking of his rubber wristwatch only cemented that this was no practical joke or dream. "What's going to happen now?"

"Nothing will happen," Izanagi said and Tsuna's head snapped up in surprise. "I have told you of your circumstances. You are now aware and will not allow your soul to slip loose once more. Regardless, if you die before your time again I shall bring your soul back."

Maybe Tsuna was still out of it from his fainting spell. Maybe it was the impact of realising he had actually died three times without fully understanding it at the time. Maybe it was the downward curve of Izanagi's lips when Tsuna had blurted aloud about him being lonely. Whatever the reason was, when Izanagi turned to leave, a spark of rare recklessness ignited in Tsuna's heart and he circled his fingers around Izanagi's wrist.

"Wait," he said and Izanagi stopped. He had the undivided attention of a Death King for the better or worse and it made his knees wobble, but he didn't let go. "I-I want to know more. About myself, about you. Will you come see me again tomorrow?"

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Author's notes: This fic is centric on Tsuna and Izanagi (OC) but the other characters will also have prominent appearances/roles. It will delve more deeply later on in the plot into the afterlife realm and the construction of Death Kings.

The story has heavy themes such as attempted suicide and self worth issues, but these issues will be addressed by the end; it should not

be taken as encouragement for self harm. Ultimately it is a story about Tsuna developing as a person, learning to accept responsibility and creating deep bonds with others.

Please leave a review if you enjoyed the chapter :)

End
file.